A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

SUPPORT GROUP GUIDE

This guide contains spoilers and is intended to use after a group has seen the film.
Thank you for using this resource to help frame a conversation with clinical-based small groups around the themes in *A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD*. We’ve created this resource to help you engage, encourage, and equip group participants to better understand their feelings, identify some root causes of those feelings, and express them in healthy ways.
THE FILM

The final episodes of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* aired in 2001, so while some viewers of the film may never have watched an episode of the TV show, Mister Rogers’ cultural impact remains lasting and relevant. The show and the film are built around the idea that all people deserve love, respect, and to be heard.

*A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD* is based on the true story of a real-life friendship between Fred and a cynical journalist. This film poses a powerful question we could all ask of ourselves — “What if you were friends with Mister Rogers?” How would it feel to have someone genuinely care about you to the point that you were invited to explore your past wounds, in a safe environment, so that you could experience the healing and freedom found in forgiving?

Regardless of your reason for walking through this resource with your group, the goal is for group participants to find restoration and hope. Walking through painful life moments requires courage and community. By accepting the invitation to explore those tender moments, you may find, just as Lloyd, the cynical journalist, discovered in the film, that life may expand exponentially when we embrace letting go of resentments and offering forgiveness. As you respond and listen to others through this Guide, you may begin to find yourself on your own healing journey.

THIS SUPPORT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide has been created as a tool to help group participants have a meaningful conversation around some of the core themes of the film. There are many reasons people join a support group, but one thing each person in a group has in common is the need to honor and respect his/her feelings. When used together, the film and this guide provide a powerful opportunity to experience healing and offer true forgiveness.

*A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD* opens in theaters Friday, November 22nd. Set aside a time to see the film with your group, then use this guide to have a guided discussion about it afterwards.

“You’ve made this day a special day by just your being you. There is no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are.” – Mister Rogers
STATEMENT FROM THE AUTHOR

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD is a moving, poignant, and powerful movie. A young journalist, Lloyd, is given the assignment of interviewing Mister Rogers for Esquire Magazine. Mister Rogers’ way of life has a profound effect on Lloyd, who is living out the outcomes of being raised with the trauma of an addictive family. Without having to show much of his early childhood, the movie depicts the consequences resulting in this man’s anger, cynicism, negativity and the impact it has in every aspect of his life. Lloyd’s anger is no match for the deep source of love that emanates from Mister Rogers. The implied simplicity of Mister Rogers’ life is only the backdrop for the power of love, truth, and a willingness to feel. “May we all take 60 seconds to reflect on those who loved us into being.”

- Claudia Black, Sr. Fellow of The Meadows
DISCUSS:

A major theme for this movie is forgiveness, which Mister Rogers defines as releasing the feelings of anger.

- Are there people in your life that you thought about as you watched Lloyd and his father struggle with asking for and getting to a place of forgiveness?
- What are your experiences with forgiveness?

Remember the restaurant scene in which Mister Rogers sits across from Lloyd and asks him to sit in silence for 60 seconds and, as he does that, to reflect on the people who loved us into being.

- As those 60 seconds passed, did you identify people in your life that loved you into being?
- How was that experience for you?

The film features several poignant lines, such as:

There are many ways you can deal with pain without hurting yourself or others. You can pound a lump of clay, or swim as fast as you can, or play the lowest keys on the piano all at the same time.

I’ve never met anyone like you before. I don’t believe you are broken.

There is no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are. Anything human is mentionable. Anything mentionable is manageable.

- What lines in the movie spoke to you the most?
- What was it about that particular line that moved you?

Recognizing Old Rabbit as the special friend in his life growing up was an emotionally impactful moment for Lloyd.

- Did you have a “special friend” in your growing up years? This could have been a stuffed animal, an imaginary friend, or a pet.
- Talk about who or what that was and what made it special to you.
For people who are raised in addictive and other types of troubled families, the presence of even one healthy caring adult in their life has the potential to offer them resiliency and inner strength.

- If you identify with being raised in a troubled family, did you have a particular person(s) in your childhood who made a positive difference in your life?
- Who were they, and what was the important message they imparted to you?

There are many powerful scenes in the movie including:

Daniel Tiger sharing with Lady Aberlin about the frightened skunk that got scared and then sprayed him and made him angry.

Lloyd's mother telling him he doesn't have to hold on to his anger.

The subway scene when the entire car sings the theme song from *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*.

Jerry and Lloyd getting into a fight at Lloyd's sister's wedding.

- What scene stood out to you and what did you find yourself thinking about?
- Did it remind you of any moments in your life? Explain.

Lloyd is clearly angry with Jerry throughout much of the film and, in one scene, screams at his father for abandoning the family as his mother was dying. Eventually, Jerry acknowledges his addictive behaviors and the pain he caused by leaving his son and daughter to cope with the illness and subsequent loss of their mother. On his deathbed, Jerry asks for Lloyd's forgiveness.

- Do you think Lloyd’s father Jerry was an alcoholic and why?
- Do you think it is important to know whether or not Jerry was an alcoholic?
- If you were in Lloyd’s shoes, would you have forgiven Jerry? Why or why not?
As Mister Rogers says in the film: “There is no normal life that is free from pain.” Sometimes, remembering your childhood can be painful: but by being an active listener, Mister Rogers helps Lloyd process the buried feelings from his difficult upbringing.

• Every viewer has their own history too. Have you carried negative or cynical beliefs and unsaid feelings from your childhood into your adulthood that would be helpful for you to look at?
• If you were friends with Mister Rogers, what do you think he would ask you to do with those feelings?

Love reigns...

• What two words would you use to describe what this movie means to you?
ABOUT CLAUDIA BLACK

Dr. Claudia Black is a renowned author and trainer internationally recognized for her pioneering and contemporary work with family systems and addictive disorders. Claudia gave “voice” to both young and adult children from addictive homes, offering a framework for their healing. This cutting-edge work would be critical in creating the foundation for the codependency field and a greater understanding of the impact of family trauma.

The recipient of numerous national awards, Dr. Black has been a keynote speaker on Capitol Hill and on Canada’s Parliament Hill. A Senior Fellow and clinical architect for the Claudia Black Young Adult Center at The Meadows, she also serves on the advisory board for the National Association of Children of Alcoholics and the advisory council of the Moyer Foundation.

ABOUT THE MEADOWS

A leader in the industry, Meadows Behavioral Healthcare is a network of specialized programs including residential and outpatient treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, trauma, eating disorders, sexual addiction, behavioral health conditions and co-occurring disorders.